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ORGANIZING FOR DISASTER:

IMPROVING U.S. FOREIGN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OPERATIONS

by

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U.S. Government (USG) agencies provide foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA) every year to disaster victims around the world. The ability to rapidly provide humanitarian aid serves America's national interests, but USG interagency coordination for FHA remains ad hoc at the operational level. For its part, the U.S. military is not fully prepared for the unique operational challenges of FHA. Consequently, valuable time is often lost improvising a USG response *after* a crisis occurs. The operational-level framework for a USG response must be in place *before* a foreign disaster strikes.

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ORGANIZING FOR DISASTER:

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Great powers remain great if they promote their own interests by serving those of others.

Josef Joffe

The United States Government (USG) provides emergency relief every year to victims of manmade and natural disasters around the globe. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), which is part of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), serves as the focal point for most USG relief efforts. Normally, OFDA—together with the local U.S. Ambassador and Country Team—can provide USG assistance with only limited involvement from other federal agencies. Sometimes, however, major disasters exceed OFDA response capabilities and require the participation of other interagency partners, including the Department of Defense (DOD). The U.S. military has played its part by providing life-saving disaster relief—called foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA) in joint military doctrine¹—from Kurdistan to Afghanistan over the past decade.

The USG's ability to rapidly provide FHA serves America's national interests by mitigating the destabilizing effects that humanitarian crises can have on countries and regions. If left unaddressed, disaster-induced instability can provide fertile conditions for transnational threats such as drug trafficking and terrorism, and it can precipitate the failure of vulnerable states. Because of their often-rapid onset and severity, major humanitarian disasters require that U.S. response operations be swiftly planned and smoothly executed for maximum life-saving impact. Effective responses to humanitarian emergencies overseas can promote U.S. influence and prestige while

helping to prevent crises from undermining national or regional stability. Conversely, haphazard FHA operations can hamper relief delivery while diminishing America's prestige and doing little to stabilize a crisis.

The USG typically joins a diverse cast of other governmental and non-governmental actors in an FHA operation, but it often plays a leading—sometimes decisive—role. Civilian and military personnel from the USG have gained much experience working together in the field, and more sophisticated FHA doctrine has produced better tactical-level coordination. Unfortunately, little attention has been focused at the operational level, where tactical-level activities are synchronized and integrated—and where USG coordination remains mostly ad hoc. Improvised coordination is compounded by inadequate military preparedness for the unique operational challenges of FHA. Consequently, valuable time is often lost organizing the USG response *after* a crisis occurs. Virtually every FHA operation has achieved some measure of success, but most could have been more effective. Regrettably, the cost of delay and inefficiency can often be measured in lost lives and human suffering.

The operational-level USG framework for FHA must be in place *before* a foreign disaster strikes. This paper describes the unique operational principles and functions of FHA and outlines the roles and responsibilities of participating USG agencies. It then illustrates how ad hoc organization of past FHA operations has hampered relief efforts. Finally, it offers several steps the USG can take to better prepare for FHA operations. These steps include pre-designating and training the Commander, Joint Task Force (CJTF), and Joint Task Force (JTF) staff for FHA; developing interagency doctrine for organizing FHA operations; and over the long term, forming a standing Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) for FHA.

FHA at the Operational Level

Since the Cold War ended, the USG has intervened in several humanitarian crises requiring broad interagency support. These encompass responses to major natural disasters, including a devastating cyclone in Bangladesh, Hurricane Mitch in Central America, and severe flooding in Mozambique. In Iraqi Kurdistan, Somalia, Rwanda, and Kosovo—and now in Afghanistan—the USG also responded to manmade disasters brought on by conflict and political strife. These disasters are known as complex emergencies. The experience gained in both natural and manmade disasters reveals some generalizable operational principles for FHA.²

Some Principles of FHA. In FHA missions, all USG participants must work toward a common strategic *objective*. Generally, this objective will be to first stabilize a humanitarian crisis and then lay the groundwork for long-term development and stability. The operational objectives of FHA missions are to relieve or reduce the effects of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions that might cause suffering.³ Because of the time-criticality of humanitarian disasters, participants must seize the initiative by rapidly assessing the situation and providing relief coverage when and where it is needed. Both the strategic and operational objectives of FHA are political and economic in nature, and they should thus be defined by civilian rather than military leaders.

USG actions must be carefully synchronized and integrated in order to attain *unity of effort* toward these common objectives. Attaining unity of effort among USG agencies is challenging but essential because they must also synchronize their activities with a panoply of host nation agencies and foreign militaries plus International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Private Volunteer Organizations—referred to hereafter as Humanitarian Relief Organizations (HROs). Humanitarian objectives are best attained if the actions of each organization are mutually

supporting, but each has its own interests and agenda—making unity of effort difficult to attain. Nevertheless, each entity will normally share the basic objectives of saving lives and reducing suffering. USG agencies can best promote unity of effort among this cast of international actors by first attaining it themselves.

Unity of effort will promote overall *economy* in the amount of USG resources committed. Effective coordination between USG agencies plus close cooperation with other relief actors will help prevent the duplication of capabilities and the expenditure of more resources than are required. Economy is especially important in the use of military assets, which are often the most costly means available for delivering aid. Because FHA operations are supposed to be temporary, the goal of USG planners should be to help the host nation and HROs stabilize the crisis situation so they can transition to long-term recovery strategies. Finally, USG efforts must also strive for *simplicity*. The USG response should not overwhelm long-term development efforts with capabilities—such as sophisticated communications or advanced medical care—that cannot be easily replicated or sustained by the host nation or HROs once the USG presence has drawn down.

Operational Functions in FHA. Guided by these generalized principles, FHA operations entail several primary functions: assessment and planning; logistics; health and medical services; security; and command, control, and coordination.⁴ Neither military doctrine nor other guidance note the major differences between these activities at the tactical and the operational levels. However, individual FHA actions—such as building a temporary camp to house displaced persons—are distinct from the orchestration of all FHA activities throughout the entire area of relief operations. The synchronization and integration of all functions is the primary operational-level responsibility of FHA. During small-scale operations, the differences between the levels of FHA

may blur, but the distinction between them assumes greater importance for larger, more complex crises.

Assessment & Planning. Assessment is the first step in FHA and entails developing a common understanding of the crisis situation to guide relief planning. A timely and accurate assessment typically requires on-site teams of disaster response experts plus the use of surveillance capabilities to determine the magnitude of the crisis, types and amounts of relief required, time constraints involved, and other factors impacting the operation. An assessment should recognize gaps in relief coverage the USG might fill and identify potential security threats to the operation. The initial assessment forms the basis for developing an overall plan for an FHA operation.⁵ Once an operation begins, the situation must be continually monitored to measure operational effectiveness and to determine when the USG may safely transition its activities to the host nation or HROs.

Logistics. The late disaster relief authority Fred Cuny observed that “Logistics is the lifeline of a relief operation.”⁶ Disaster aid must be transported to the affected area and distributed to those in need. Relief supplies may require temporary storage facilities and distribution centers to be established, and shelter must be provided for displaced persons. In the wake of a major disaster, infrastructure repairs are often needed to reestablish severed transportation links. Operational planners must develop a system to provide these individual functions across the entire area of relief operations.

Health & Medical Services. Because epidemiological threats and emergency medical needs are usually a major concern in FHA operations, the provision of health and medical care is also vital. At the operational level, a system must be developed to organize and administer these services throughout the entire area.

Security. In complex emergencies, relief workers and supplies must receive adequate protection before distribution and relief efforts can safely proceed. The security function is one that the military is uniquely equipped to provide, and a plan must be devised to provide security coverage wherever threats to the operation might exist.

Command, Control, & Coordination. Because no single individual or agency exercises control over all the host nation agencies, militaries, or HROs, coordination between the disparate actors becomes a primary focus of FHA operations. One or more Civil-Military Operations Centers (CMOC) may be formed to provide military coordination with civilian agencies in the field.⁷ The CMOC focus is on day-to-day operations and synchronizing local civilian and military activities. Decisions on how to organize the relief operation, set priorities, apportion responsibilities, and establish field coordination are made at the operational level—commonly in a United Nations-run Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) or equivalent, where key decision makers coordinate overall relief strategy.⁸

Other Functions. In a humanitarian crisis, communications infrastructure may be damaged or non-existent, and FHA operations may require that they be reestablished. Another function often required after a natural disaster is search and rescue. Decisions on how to perform all these functions across the entire impacted area must be made at the operational level. In performing these FHA functions, each participating USG agency has some comparative advantages it can employ as well as several specified responsibilities.

USG Roles & Responsibilities. The chief of the U.S. diplomatic mission, normally the Ambassador, initiates the USG response to a humanitarian crisis by declaring a disaster.⁹ The Ambassador is responsible for all USG personnel in the country except for U.S. military forces

under the combatant command of a Commander in Chief (CINC).¹⁰ The Ambassador integrates these personnel on a Country Team, which also may include members from DOD agencies assigned to the Embassy.¹¹ The Country Team can be tailored to help coordinate USG efforts during a crisis, and it will normally include a mission disaster response officer (MDRO) from the embassy staff or local USAID Mission. The MDRO serves as a focal point for USG disaster relief efforts in the affected country.¹² The Ambassador and Country Team provide crucial coordination with the host nation, and they are largely responsible for defining the post-crisis end state.

Vital disaster response expertise comes from OFDA, which will dispatch a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to a stricken country. The DART is responsible for coordinating a situation assessment, recommending a USG response, managing USG on-site relief operations, and managing logistics for USG-supplied aid.¹³ DART experts quickly identify host nation and HRO resources and capabilities, and they identify gaps the USG might fill. The DART identifies the fastest, most effective way to provide assistance. Often, the best method is to provide funds to the host nation or HROs or to contract supplies and services locally. The DART may also arrange transport of relief supplies stockpiled at OFDA warehouses. As an FHA operation progresses, the DART will monitor the effectiveness of the USG effort and identify organizations to which it can eventually transition USG operations. When relief requirements exceed local capabilities, the DART will recommend the participation of other USG agencies, including DOD.

The U.S. military role in FHA is generally to fill gaps that other USG agencies, the host nation, and HROs cannot fill. The regional CINC will normally organize a JTF to provide several unique military capabilities. First, military transportation assets can deliver vast quantities of relief supplies to affected areas. Military engineers can restore infrastructure, and medical personnel can

provide life-saving care. Military Civil Affairs (CA) personnel are experts at coordinating military operations with civilian agencies. These experts can support a Humanitarian Assistance Support Team (HAST), which a geographic CINC may send to provide him with an initial situation assessment and to prepare for the deployment of U.S. forces. CA personnel are also likely to organize and run CMOCs. Other military personnel may help locate and rescue isolated disaster victims. Finally, in the case of a complex emergency, military forces often protect relief providers and supplies.

Organizational Guidance. Despite increasing USG familiarity with FHA, guidance on how to synchronize and integrate the activities of the Ambassador and Country Team, DART, and military JTF remains surprisingly incomplete. Good tactical-level doctrine and guidance may be found in Version 3 of OFDA's *Field Operating Guide*, which outlines DART responsibilities and organizations, and in the newly-minted Joint Publication 3-07.6, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance*. These publications also discuss the need for operational-level coordination, but they offer little guidance on how it is accomplished. Although individual embassies normally have a Mission Disaster Response Plan (MDRP), the Department of State (DOS) lacks any standardized guidance for synchronizing Embassy, DART, and JTF efforts.

With no directive interagency doctrine, the relationships between the primary USG participants in FHA remain largely undefined. Consequently, relationships must be clarified on an ad hoc basis *after* a humanitarian crisis has erupted—including the all-important step of clarifying who is in charge of the overall FHA operation. This task is even more difficult in situations in which the U.S. has no embassy, no Ambassador, and no Country Team—as in Somalia—or when a disaster impacts multiple nations as did Hurricane Mitch. Virtually no guidance for organizing

interagency operations exists for these situations. These operational-level gaps have had a notable impact on past FHA operations.

FHA Operational Lessons Learned

Each of the FHA operations conducted by the USG since 1991 has achieved some measure of success, but many were hampered by inadequate unity of effort at the operational level. A wealth of experience highlights cases where interagency coordination has fallen short as well as situations where it has worked well. Experience reveals two overarching operational shortcomings that adversely affect FHA operations. First, the U.S. military is not well prepared to conduct FHA at the operational level, and second, the lack of interagency doctrine hampers FHA operations by the USG.

Military Not Fully Prepared for Operational-Level FHA. Several examples illustrate how the military does not systematically prepare senior leaders or their staffs for FHA-focused JTFs. A DOD-sponsored study on the 1998 responses to Hurricane Georges and Hurricane Mitch¹⁴ found that none of the CJTFs had FHA experience and that they were unfamiliar with “the role and capabilities of civilian USG agencies specializing in foreign disaster response.” This led to “a substantial breakdown” in the application of joint doctrine as CMOCs were organized late and were often inaccessible to other relief organizations.¹⁵ Because the CMOCs provided little value, they were generally ignored by HROs. During Somalia relief efforts,¹⁶ the JTF was overburdened with support requests from a bewildering array of HROs until the staff learned that the DART could help organize them.¹⁷

Unfamiliarity with FHA may cause JTFs to pursue misplaced priorities that contribute little to the ultimate objectives. In the Hurricane Mitch response, JTF Aguila in El Salvador was “more concerned with base camp operations than providing disaster relief assistance to the populace.”¹⁸ Despite a permissive environment, the CJTF employed force protection measures designed for hostile conditions. This emphasis on force protection limited the impact of the relief operation.¹⁹ Similarly, current USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios observes from his Somalia experience that “U.S. military commanders became increasingly, some would say exclusively, focused on the security of U.S. forces.... Military reluctance to define its narrow mandate constructively may have prolonged rather than diminished the time its services were required.”²⁰

A CJTF who lacks FHA training or experience may also make organizational decisions that hamper relief efforts. During Operation Shining Hope, which aided refugees fleeing from Kosovo in 1999, the CJTF set up his headquarters in Germany, which hindered effective coordination with other USG agencies and HROs on-site in the Balkan region.²¹ Similarly, JTF Aguila in El Salvador was far removed from the USG agencies in the capital that could have facilitated JTF coordination with host nation agencies and HROs following Hurricane Mitch. JTF Aguila was also remote from USG officials and HROs in Nicaragua and Guatemala, which joined El Salvador in the JTF area of responsibility.

Some CJTFs and their staffs have earned high marks from their USG partners. One was Lieutenant General H.C. Stackpole III, U.S. Marine Corps, who was CJTF for Operation Sea Angel in 1991.²² This effort to aid Bangladesh following a devastating cyclone succeeded in part from the good fortune of having a commander with Stackpole’s personality, flexibility, and instinct to follow the lead of his civilian counterparts—especially the U.S. Ambassador. Another positive

example was U.S. Air Force Major General Joseph H. Wehrle. Aware that his responsibilities as commander of Third Air Force would likely include FHA, Wehrle prepared himself and his staff by meeting with OFDA personnel and by conducting an FHA exercise with crucial HRO participation. When flooding struck Mozambique early in 2000, they formed JTF Atlas Response. Wehrle appreciated the importance of working closely with the Ambassador, and he and his staff were highly receptive to DART inputs.²³

According to OFDA personnel, Wehrle got FHA “as right as anyone.”²⁴ However, future FHA operations may not benefit from a CJTF as well-suited for FHA. One reason is that the military lacks formalized FHA training for commanders and staff; another is that it lacks a process to ensure that the right people are tasked for FHA-focused JTFs. Without a system to prepare staffs and leadership for FHA operations, the military treats FHA as a “pick-up” game. Future CJTFs and JTF staffs are also likely to be hamstrung by the lack of interagency doctrine for FHA.

Lack of Interagency Doctrine Hampers FHA. FHA lacks interagency doctrine that explains how to synchronize and integrate JTF, DART, Ambassador, and Country Team efforts. The initial direction given to Lieutenant General Stackpole helps illustrate the problem: “I was to report to the U.S. Ambassador and provide humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh, period. Nobody told me how to do it; no one gave any additional instructions.”²⁵ Stackpole was left to make ad hoc arrangements with USG personnel in Bangladesh on his own. He got it mostly right, but improvisation is no recipe for success.

One gap in FHA guidance is that overall authority for an operation is seldom clearly assigned. With no single person or agency in charge, unity of USG efforts is difficult to attain. Following the USG response to Hurricane Mitch in 1998, a joint DOS/USAID interagency review

found that while a large DART “coordinated closely with both the Embassy and the military Joint Task Force, ... no single agency perceived that it had the authority or capacity to provide a full, initial assessment of the scope of the disaster or manage the overall U.S. response.”²⁶ Similarly, the DOD study found the lack of a “management focal point and clear interagency doctrine hampered interagency coordination, and delayed effective response.”²⁷ During Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, neither the civilian agencies nor the military had clear authority to define the mission. Consequently, different expectations were created between the JTF staffs and their civilian counterparts regarding how much the military would assist the relief organizations. This confusion persisted within the JTF as well.²⁸

For their part, civilian agencies other than OFDA lack operational doctrine—making their responses “ad hoc, slow, and changeable, and thus difficult for the military to anticipate in its own planning.”²⁹ Assessment is one area in particular that suffers from the lack of interagency doctrine. Following Hurricane Georges and Hurricane Mitch, CJTFs, U.S. Ambassadors, Country Teams, DARTs, and other USG agencies all generated damage and needs assessments. Different approaches, timing, and methodologies used to develop these assessments led to inconsistent and overlapping data, which “hindered effective planning for the USG’s relief and rehabilitation efforts.” Conflicting assessment data made development of an accurate, overall picture of the region-wide situation “a significant challenge.”³⁰ The resulting confusion contributed to serious delays in the USG response.

The lack of interagency doctrine has also fostered inefficiency and wasted effort. After Hurricane Mitch, individual USG agencies contracted separately for local supplies and services, including water purification units, construction materials, and transportation services. Without

coordination between them, they ended up competing with each other and with the local governments and NGOs—inadvertently bidding up prices and rapidly depleting resources.³¹ During Operation Support Hope,³² which aided refugees fleeing from Rwanda, the military sent water purification units to Lake Kivu without coordinating with the DART or with other humanitarian agencies. These units took too much time to set up and produced too little water. Furthermore, the lake water was of sufficient quality that only pumping—not purification—was needed. Consequently, “U.S. military efforts actually contributed to a delay in the distribution of water to the various camps.”³³

If not properly synchronized with civilian USG agencies, military projects can threaten long-term development efforts “if the local population develops higher expectations of what Americans will provide,” or if they “create unexpected burdens and costs for NGOs or civilian agencies that try to sustain them.”³⁴ For example, military medical personnel may seek to aid the local population by starting an immunization program, but the host nation and HROs may lack the resources to sustain the program once the military has departed. Both Generals Stackpole and Wehrle were careful to coordinate military efforts with civilian USG experts, and both followed sound advice to restore the situation to pre-disaster standards rather than to make unsustainable improvements.

Preparing for Success

FHA operations are too complex for improvisation, and the costs of “ad hocery” can be high. Following the Hurricane Mitch response, the DOS/USAID review found that “initial delays in deploying sufficient U.S. military assets or launching a large-scale civilian assistance effort likely contributed to the impression that the U.S. was slow to respond.”³⁵ Such an impression may cost

the U.S. international influence and prestige, and delays also prolong suffering. The USG approach to FHA must become more institutionalized. Three steps—organized by ascending cost, complexity, and difficulty—can be taken to ensure that future USG interagency efforts are more effective. Individually, the military can pre-designate and train CJTFs and staffs for FHA. The military can also advocate the formation of operational-level interagency doctrine for FHA among its USG partners. Over the long term, a standing JIATF might offer the best way to ensure unity of effort among USG participants in FHA.

Pre-designate & Train CJTFs & Staff. Many observers have viewed FHA as peripheral to the military's warfighting mission, and until recent years, little has been done to prepare military forces for it. The traditional mindset is best captured by historian Samuel Huntington, who asserts that:

The mission of the armed forces is combat, to deter and defeat enemies of the United States. The military must be recruited, organized, trained, and equipped for that purpose alone. Its capabilities can, and should, be used for humanitarian and other civilian activities, but the military should not be organized or prepared or trained to perform such roles.³⁶

The opposing view calls for some military personnel to be organized, trained, and equipped solely to perform FHA and other Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW).

A better solution can be found somewhere between these extremes. Because the U.S. has real interests at stake in FHA, and because the military's role will almost certainly continue, some military personnel must be prepared for FHA tasks while retaining their warfighting skills. Many warfighting capabilities such as force protection and logistics are easily translatable to FHA operations. However, many features of FHA are unique and require specialized skills and training.

To provide the right operational leadership, the military should begin by pre-designating and training CJTFs and their staffs.³⁷

Each regional CINC should identify a cadre of senior officers and staff who will form a JTF for FHA operations. While these individuals could have other primary responsibilities, they would receive specialized training for FHA. Their training could entail FHA exercises that include participation from other USG agencies as well as theater-based HROs. Predesignation would allow military personnel to become familiar and build personal relationships with USG relief agencies and HROs. The military should also pre-designate HAST members and provide them with the proper tools and training for assessment. HAST members should be trained to synchronize their assessments with DARTs and to adopt common assessment standards.³⁸

Some preliminary steps have been taken already. For example, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) maintains a deployable JTF augmentation cell (DJTFAC) that will form the nucleus of a JTF.³⁹ Members of the PACOM DJTFAC currently receive some specialized FHA training and participate in FHA-based exercises that include participation from civilian agencies.⁴⁰ However, the military needs to adopt a more formalized approach to FHA training that applies to all regional commands, and it needs a system that tracks trained personnel to ensure they are actually tasked for FHA-focused JTF staffs. One model for pre-designation and training is domestic disaster response, in which senior officers are assigned and receive specialized training to be Defense Coordinating Officers (DCO) for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.⁴¹

Formulate Interagency FHA Doctrine. Reflecting on his experience as the President's Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador Robert B. Oakley identified the need to "Combine political, military, and humanitarian operations" in the future.⁴² This task requires the formulation of

interagency doctrine for FHA that applies across federal agency boundaries. This step cannot be accomplished unilaterally, but the military can play a leading role with its doctrinal expertise. One area in which interagency doctrine would prove useful is in clarifying the relationships between different civilian-military coordinating mechanisms.

Former OFDA Director Jim Kunder argues for a greater conceptual distinction between the CMOC and HOC.⁴³ CMOCs are primarily responsible for tactical coordination between the military and HROs. While CMOC coordination is essential, Ambassador Oakley observes that “One also needs a formal, top-level strategy committee of military and civilian personnel to ensure better coordination and to see that humanitarian and political issues get adequate attention from military forces and *vice versa*.”⁴⁴ That body is typically a HOC or equivalent. Interagency doctrine should focus Ambassador, DART team leader, and CJTF attention on coordinating operational-level activities—such as formulating relief strategies—at the HOC. Doctrine could help ensure that U.S. operational leaders are well-positioned to interact with host nation and HRO decision makers.

Perhaps the most important requirement of interagency doctrine is the need to determine who will be in charge of USG efforts during an FHA operation. Because both the strategic and operational objectives of FHA are mainly political and economic in nature, they are best determined by civilian officials—normally from DOS or USAID. Civilian control of FHA operations should be formalized in interagency doctrine by creating the position of Disaster Response Coordinator (DRC).⁴⁵ The U.S. Ambassador or chief of mission could be designated DRC in a single-country disaster, or a President-appointed Special Envoy could be DRC for a multi-country crisis or when the U.S. has no diplomatic mission. Alternatively, the DRC could be a senior disaster response expert supplied by USAID. Interagency doctrine should also provide for supported/supporting

agency relationships. DOD and other agencies would most often be supporting agencies for DOS in a humanitarian operation.

Military forces would follow direction provided by the DRC, although they would by law remain under the combatant command of the regional CINC. The Joint Forces Commander (JFC) and the DART team leader would be the senior advisors to the DRC from their respective agencies. The DRC would have the flexibility to organize the operation as needed, but interagency FHA doctrine should provide an organizational template as a common starting point—especially important in rapid-onset emergencies. This template could be for a JIATF, which would be organized by functional area much like a military JTF and a DART. Each element would normally be led by a civilian expert.

A Plans and Assessment Element would be responsible for collecting, analyzing, and tracking data on the disaster. It would include assessment experts from OFDA and the Country Teams as well as military FHA experts—all using common USG assessment standards. Military members could also include intelligence personnel capable of tapping national intelligence and surveillance resources to track refugee movements, identify pockets of trapped populations, and meet other collection requirements. Finally, this element would develop an interagency plan for the FHA operation and update it as necessary.

An Operations Element would be responsible for providing security, which is crucial in a complex emergency. The operations element would also provide oversight to the CMOCs. Finally, the operations element would be responsible for organizing search and rescue activities, and it would manage all health and medical services.⁴⁶ The *Logistics Element* would help establish a logistics system that orders, receives, distributes, and tracks relief supplies provided by the USG. It

would also identify required infrastructure repairs. The element could use local contractors after ensuring they are not competing with other relief agencies and after Country Team members determine the policy impact of their use.⁴⁷ Other JIATF elements could be formed by the DRC as needed for communications, administration, or other functions. Figure 1 illustrates how a JIATF-FHA template might appear in interagency doctrine.

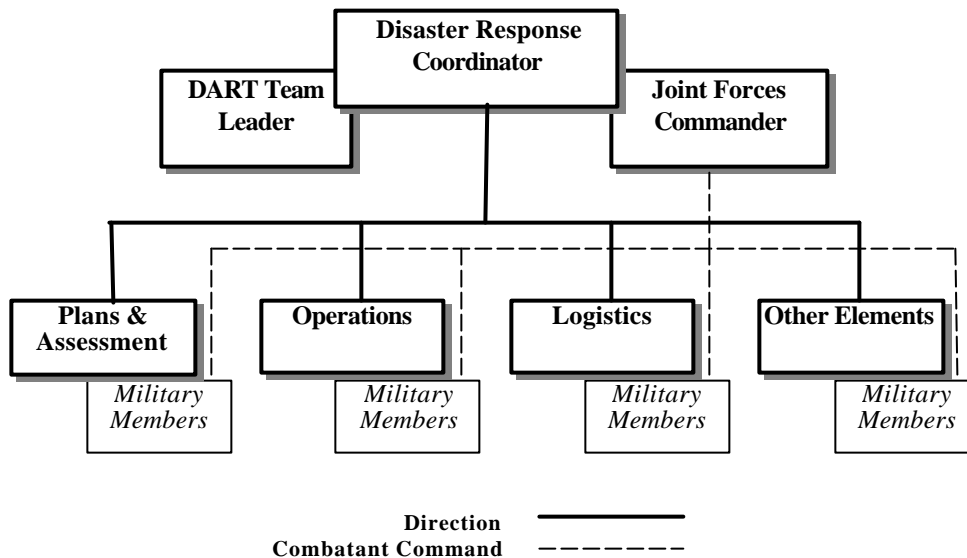


Figure 1. JIATF Template for FHA

Establishing interagency doctrine for FHA would require coordination between multiple agencies and the commitment of each to a formalized FHA process. The effort would also have to overcome ingrained bureaucratic impediments to interagency coordination within each organization. Nevertheless, interagency FHA doctrine would offer a relatively inexpensive improvement and should be pursued by the military with its USG partners. A more costly but farther-reaching step would be to establish a standing JIATF for FHA.

Establish a Standing JIATF for FHA. Using the JIATF template described above, a permanent JIATF-FHA could be based at OFDA in Washington D.C. and would consist of deployable civilian as well as military members. JIATF-FHA would be led by a full-time DRC, who would be a senior civilian disaster relief official. Its military contingent would be akin to a DJTFAC and would include a senior commander and staff. In the event of a humanitarian disaster, JIATF-FHA would send a combined civilian-military DART to assess the situation, and a mission-tailored JIATF could deploy to the affected region if needed.

Once deployed, the JIATF would report to the Ambassador or Special Envoy, who could assume the DRC role. In some situations, the permanent DRC could remain in charge of the operation. When the affected country has a U.S. Embassy, Country Team members could be integrated into the JIATF elements. The regional CINC would retain the prerogative to designate his own commander for the JIATF's military contingent as well as for U.S. forces participating in the field. Otherwise, those responsibilities would remain with the permanent military commander on the JIATF. The JFC and military forces would remain under the combatant command of a CINC but would follow direction from the DRC. Finally, the DRC and JIATF senior advisors would represent the entire USG effort to the host nation and HROs at the HOC or other senior decision-making bodies.

The establishment of a standing JIATF for FHA would be a relatively costly step requiring additional resource commitments from several agencies. While the military would incur the cost of contributing the JIATF's uniformed contingent, the greatest burden would be borne by DOS and USAID—agencies with only a fraction of DOD's resources. The JIATF would require the civilian agencies to develop a ready reserve of personnel who can be quickly deployed to overseas posts

during humanitarian crises. With the exception of OFDA, civilian agencies lack sufficient deployability at present.⁴⁸ Major bureaucratic hurdles would also need to be overcome. However, a standing JIATF offers an ideal for how USG agencies might attain unity of effort in the future given the requisite commitment of resources and political will. The military should develop this concept further with its interagency partners and support the appropriation of the necessary resources by Congress.

Conclusion

The U.S. has real interests at stake in FHA, and the USG can no longer afford to treat the organization of FHA operations like a “pick-up” game. FHA has unique characteristics at the operational level, and recent history indicates that more attention must be focused on how the U.S. Ambassador, Country Team, DART, and JTF organize FHA operations. Pre-designating and training CJTFs and JTF staffs for FHA is a relatively simple and inexpensive step that the military can and should implement unilaterally. Establishing interagency doctrine for FHA would remain inexpensive but would be much more difficult. A standing JIATF would be the most costly and difficult proposal by far, but it offers a model for how the USG might best attain unity of effort in future FHA operations. These proposals form building blocks for better preparing the U.S. military and its interagency partners for FHA. Better preparation before a crisis will promote greater unity of effort during the response and will save time when days or hours can make a difference in the outcome.

NOTES

¹ Joint Pub 3-07.6 defines the purpose of FHA as “to relieve or reduce the results of natural or manmade disasters or other endemic conditions such as human suffering, disease, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or loss of property.” See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Joint Publication 3-07.6 (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 15 August 2001), I-1.

² The principles of FHA are not defined. Those proposed here are adapted from relevant Principles of War and Principles of Military Operations Other Than War. They are further informed by other literature as well as personal interviews by the author. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, Joint Publication 3-0, (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 10 September 2001), Appendix A; and Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, Joint Publication 3-07, (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 16 June 1995), Chapter II.

³ Joint Pub 3-07.6, I-1.

⁴ The operational functions outlined are amalgamated from a variety of sources and are influenced by Milan Vego’s operational functions. See Milan Vego, Operational Warfare (Newport, Rhode Island: U.S. Naval War College, 2000), Part IV.

⁵ JP 3-07.6, IV-1 – IV-4; and U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Humanitarian Response, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Field Operations Guide, Version 3.0, Chapter II, <<http://www.info.usaid.gov/ofda>> [13 January 2002].

⁶ Frederick C. Cuny, with Richard B. Hill, Famine, Conflict and Response (West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1999), 96.

⁷ A Civil-Military Operations Center is an ad hoc organization, normally established by a CINC or CJTF, that is designed to coordinate between military forces and other USG agencies, the host nation, and HROs. A CMOC has no set structure, size, or composition, and the number of CMOCs may vary depending upon the size of the crisis and the role of the military. A CMOC may also be provided a different label depending upon host nation sensitivities. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Civil Military Affairs, Joint Publication 3-57, (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 8 February 2001), GL-6 – GL-7.

⁸ The HOC is an “interagency policy making and coordinating body that does not exercise C2 but seeks to achieve unity of effort among all participants in a large FHA operation.” It is typically organized by the UN but may also be may be established by the host nation. See Joint Pub 3-57, IV-8 – 10.

⁹ When a U.S. diplomatic mission is not headed by an Ambassador, the chief of mission is the senior diplomatic officer assigned to the mission such as the charge d'affaires. See Barry K. Simmons, "Executing U.S. Foreign Policy Through the Country Team Concept," The Air Force Law Review 37 (1994), 129.

¹⁰ The authority of the chief of mission is defined as follows: "Under the direction of the President, the chief of mission to a foreign country shall have full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all Government executive branch employees in that country (except for employees under the command of a United States area military commander) (excerpt from 22 USC 3827[a])." See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Interagency Coordination During Joint Operations, Joint Publication 3-08, Volume II, (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 9 October 1996), II-25.

¹¹ DOD agencies typically assigned to a U.S. Embassy include the U.S. Defense Attaché Office and the Security Assistance Organization. Members from these agencies may serve on the Country Team and can provide crucial assistance during an FHA operation through their ties to the host nation military. See Joint Pub 3-08, Vol. II, II-16.

¹² Joint Pub 3-07.6, II-2.

¹³ OFDA FOG, IV-3.

¹⁴ Hurricanes Georges and Mitch were severe storms that struck the Western Hemisphere in Fall 1998. The USG responded to both storms with major relief efforts that included a major military role. Hurricane Mitch was especially severe and caused tremendous damage and loss of life in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Military FHA operations were conducted by JTF Bravo, a standing JTF which focused on Honduras, and by JTF Aguila, an ad hoc JTF which was established in El Salvador to handle relief operations in the other three countries. See A. Martin Lidy, M. Michele Cecil, James Kunder, and Samuel H. Packer, Effectiveness of DoD Humanitarian Relief Efforts in Response to Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, P-3560, (Alexandria, Virginia: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2001), ES-1 – ES-8.

¹⁵ Lidy, et al, B-70.

¹⁶ The USG responded to the complex emergency in Somalia with an airlift of food in July 1992 and with Operation Restore Hope in December, when the situation continued to worsen. The U.S. military, a special envoy, DART teams, and other USG representatives joined HROs and other militaries under a UN umbrella to aid Somalia. A more coercive UN mandate was passed in 1993 to disarm local warlords and enforce a political settlement. This led to confrontation culminating in the deaths of 18 U.S. service members and the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Although the operation remains controversial, it helped save 200,000 lives and can be judged a humanitarian success. See Robert B. Oakley, "Somalia: A Case Study," in Two Perspectives on Interventions and Humanitarian Operations, ed. Earl H. Tilford, Jr., (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 1 July 1997), 1-24.

¹⁷ Jonathan T. Dworken, Improving Marine Coordination with Relief Organizations in Humanitarian Assistance Operations, CRM 95-161.10, (Alexandria, Virginia: Center for Naval Analyses, 1996), 19.

¹⁸ Colonel Douglas J. Monroe, 350th Civil Affairs Command, After Action Report for Operation Fuerzas Apoyando, JTF-Aguila, Pensacola, Florida, 12 February 1999.

¹⁹ Lidy, et al, B-90 – B-91.

²⁰ Andrew S. Natsios, “Humanitarian Relief Intervention in Somalia: The Economics of Chaos,” in Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention, ed. Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 91-92.

²¹ JTF Shining Hope aided Kosovo refugees in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia during Operation Allied Force. The JTF was formed on 4 April 1999, and its headquarters was based in Einsiedlerhof, Germany. The geographical separation of the headquarters complicated interagency coordination according to both civilian and military participants. See “JTF Shining Hope Completes Humanitarian Mission,” U.S. Air Forces in Europe News Service, 29 June 1999, <<http://www.usafe.af.mil/news/news99/uns99254.htm>> [26 January 2002]. International Logistics Division personnel, Joint Staff J-4 Directorate of Logistics, interviewed by author, 14 September 2000, Washington; OFDA personnel, interviewed by author, 7 November 2000, Washington; and personnel from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs, interviewed by author, 7 December 2000, Washington.

²² In May 1991, Operation Sea Angel employed U.S. Marines returning from Operation Desert Storm to provide FHA in Bangladesh following a cyclone that killed nearly 150,000 people. The operation focused on restoring damaged and destroyed infrastructure so that relief aid could be delivered to those cut off in severely impacted coastal areas. See Chris Seiple, The U.S. Military/NGO Relationship in Humanitarian Interventions, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, Center for Strategic Leadership, 1996), 75-78; and Lieutenant General H.C. Stackpole III, “Angels from the Sea,” United States Naval Institute Proceedings 118, no. 5 (May 1992), 110-116.

²³ JTF Atlas Response was formed after devastating flooding hit Mozambique. The floods left over 500,000 people displaced and affected 5 million persons in one of the world’s poorest countries. JTF efforts were focused on the distribution of relief aid and with providing aerial assessment as well as coordination with the DART, Ambassador, and host nation and HRO representatives. See United Nations, “Report on the United Nations Role in Coordinating and Mobilising Humanitarian Assistance to Mozambique Following the Devastating Floods,” New York, June 2000. Lieutenant General Joseph H. Wehrle, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, U.S. Air Force, and

Joint Task Force Commander, Operation Atlas Response (Commander, Third Air Force, 1999-2000), interviewed by author, 17 November 2000, Fort Dix, New Jersey; International Logistics Division personnel, Joint Staff J-4 Directorate of Logistics, interviewed by author, 14 September 2000, Washington; OFDA personnel, interviewed by author, 7 November 2000, Washington.

²⁴ OFDA personnel, interviewed by author, 7 November 2000, Washington.

²⁵ Stackpole, 112.

²⁶ Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, Interagency Review of U.S. Government Civilian Humanitarian and Transition Programs, Internal Report, (No date), Annex 2-3.

²⁷ Lidy, et al, III-14.

²⁸ Jonathan T. Dworken, "Restore Hope: Coordinating Relief Operations," Joint Forces Quarterly 8 (Summer 1995), 18; and Kevin M. Kennedy, "The Relationship Between the Military and Humanitarian Organizations in Operation Restore Hope," in Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention, ed. Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 114.

²⁹ Jennifer Morrison Taw, Interagency Coordination in Military Operations Other Than War: Implications for the U.S. Army, MR-825-A, (Santa Monica, California: RAND Arroyo Center, 1997), 13.

³⁰ Lidy, et al, B-1, B-3 – B-4, B-7.

³¹ Ibid., B-119.

³² Operation Support Hope was launched in July 1994 following a genocide campaign against Rwandan Tutsis. After a Tutsi-dominated movement seized power in Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of Hutus fled the country in fear of reprisals. JTF Support Hope focused on providing aid to the Hutu refugees in Zaire and other countries surrounding Rwanda. See Seiple, 139-170.

³³ Taw, 25, interview with OFDA personnel, April 1995.

³⁴ Ibid., 26.

³⁵ DOS/USAID, Annex 2-2.

³⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, "New Contingencies, Old Roles," Joint Force Quarterly 2, (Autumn 1993), 43.

³⁷ The Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) study on Hurricanes Georges and Mitch explores options for training and pre-designating CJTFs and JTF staffs for FHA operations. One option for

providing a headquarters staff is to establish one or more standby JTF headquarters in Joint Forces Command (JFCOM). Another option could be expanding the mission of JTF Civil Support, which is a standing JFCOM JTF currently focused on consequence management within the United States. See Lidy, et al, B-15.

³⁸ The IDA study on Hurricanes Georges and Mitch called for a more systematic and standardized USG approach to assessments. See Lidy, et al, B-1 – B-8.

³⁹ A DJTFAC or similar organization can be assembled from a CINC headquarters staff to initiate the JTF planning process and to form the core of a deployed JTF staff. Members of a DJTFAC have other primary responsibilities on the headquarters staff, but they may receive specialized training in FHA and other types of mission. For a brief description of the DJTFAC concept, see Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures, Joint Publication 5-00.2, (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 13 January 1999), IX-7 – IX-11.

⁴⁰ Personnel from the Center of Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, U.S. Pacific Command, interviewed by author, 7 February 2001, Honolulu, Hawaii.

⁴¹ The Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) study on Hurricanes Georges and Mitch compares the role of the CJTF in FHA to the DCO in a domestic disaster scenario. See Lidy, et al, B-16.

⁴² Oakley, 23.

⁴³ James Kunder, Adjunct Research Staff Member, Operational Evaluation Division, Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia; and former Director, U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development, interviewed by author, 27 February 2001, Fort Dix, New Jersey.

⁴⁴ Oakley, 22.

⁴⁵ Under an OFDA contract, IDA drafted a plan for foreign disaster relief modeled on FEMA's Federal Response Plan for domestic disasters. The author's DRC proposal was influenced by the "Foreign Disaster Country Coordinator" proposed by IDA. See Institute for Defense Analyses, "Federal Foreign Disaster Response Plan (Draft)," 19 October 2000, 8.

⁴⁶ Although health and medical services fall under logistics in joint military doctrine, OFDA typically includes them in operations. See OFDA FOG, IV-2.

⁴⁷ Lidy, et al, B-72.

⁴⁸ According to the DOS/USAID report, "Kosovo highlighted the need for a more robust USG operational capacity to handle the nonmilitary aspects of crises like Kosovo." See DOS/USAID, Annex 1-7.

ACRONYMS

CA	Civil Affairs
CJTF	Commander, Joint Task Force
CINC	Commander-In-Chief
CMOC	Civil-Military Operations Center
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DCO	Defense Coordinating Officer
DJTFAFAC	Deployable Joint Task Force Augmentation Cell
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DRC	Disaster Response Coordinator
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFDRP	Federal Foreign Disaster Response Plan
FHA	Foreign Humanitarian Assistance
FOG	Field Operations Guide
FRP	Federal Response Plan
HAST	Humanitarian Assistance Support Team
HOC	Humanitarian Operations Center
HRO	Humanitarian Relief Organization
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
IO	International Organization
JFCOM	U.S. Joint Forces Command
JIATF	Joint Interagency Task Force
JTF	Joint Task Force
MDRO	Mission Disaster Response Officer
MDRP	Mission Disaster Response Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
SOUTHCOM	U.S. Southern Command
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government

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